

FRIENDS OF MOUNT DOUGLAS

October 2005



One Man's Ivy

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Overview

Since our Society's inauguration in 1989 we have had two long term goals of a quite specific nature. One has been the control of the stormwater that, over years of development within the watershed and in increasing quantities, has been flooding through storm drains into Douglas Creek during periods of heavy rain. The unchecked force of this water, together with the pollution it carries from paved areas,, has endangered existing and potential fish habitat in the Creek. The other goal has been the conjoint protection of the beach and the shoreline. Due to our active input, promising techniques for achieving these two goals have finally been worked out. Much now depends on the political will to see them implemented.

The problem with invasive species

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society came into being in 1989 to protect Mount Douglas Park against the erosion of its natural assets. Initially this threat of erosion came from attempts to subdivide land out of the Park to accommodate car traffic and the expansion of facilities for electronic communication. However, since warding off these attempts with some measure of success, we have been faced with something more insidious. This consists in the spread of the invasive species that now are threatening the Park's biodiversity. Among such species, English ivy has been the most destructive. It smothers large areas of native undergrowth and weakens the trees it climbs either by cutting off sap rising from the base or by lowering their resistance to strong winds.

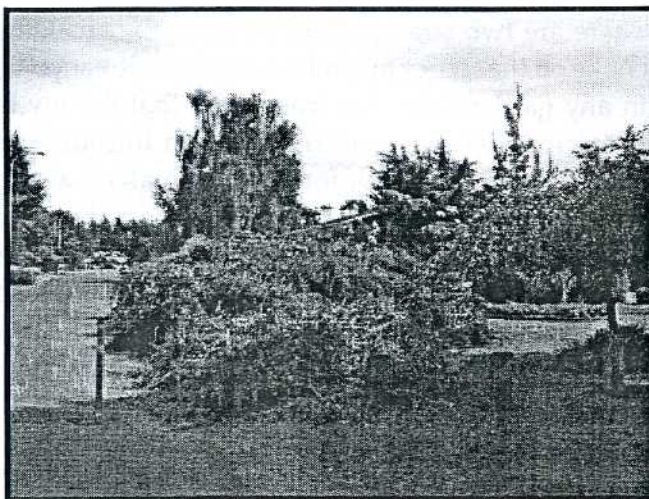
There are two strategies for meeting the challenge posed by this invasion. One is to choke off the source by prohibiting the cultivation of ivy in neighbouring gardens, indeed in any gardens, for it is from there that the ivy has entered the Park. Unfortunately, municipalities are concerned that in introducing such a measure they may expose themselves to criticism for not first making a serious effort to eliminate ivy from the parks under their jurisdiction—an effort they, for lack of man/woman power, think they are not in a position to make. The other strategy consists in recruiting volunteers, mainly from the neighbourhood, who dedicate some of their time to eliminating ivy and other invasive species from parks. Furthermore, the visibility of these volunteers may help the neighbouring community, including gardeners, to appreciate more fully the ecological harm that ivy can do.

One group of volunteers, consisting in part of members of the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society, has in fact been convening over the past year, on the first Sunday morning of every month, to pull ivy in the Park. On whatever site we may be working we set up notices to inform the public what we are doing and why. Because of the sheer scale of the invasion, so far have been limiting ourselves to attacking smaller, relatively isolated patches to prevent them from spreading.

However, mention of the group effort here has been just for the sake of comparison and contrast. It is not this group but Dick Battles who has been responsible for the major educative impact of this activity. He is a member of our Society but, since Sunday morning is not a suitable time for him, he has been pulling ivy entirely on his own. His output has far exceeded the total pulled by the group over the time of its operation. His efforts have been directed to large areas rather than to isolated patches of the invasion, and resulted in four or five quite enormous piles, the presence of which couldn't possibly be ignored or not remarked upon by walkers on the much-frequented trail on which they were located. The best measure of their mass lies in the fact that, as a precaution against the piles at some stage catching fire, five of the municipality's tractors and two buggies were required to haul them into a holding area off Edgemont Road. From there the mass was taken away in four dump truck loads for disposal. That in itself was quite an eye catcher for all in the neighbourhood.

How much money Saanich Parks invested in this part of the operation we cannot say, but in any case no one can now accuse them of not taking an active part in the attack on the ivy scourge in areas under their direct jurisdiction. (Perhaps, then, the time has now come for the municipality to list ivy as a noxious plant to be prohibited from gardens?) As for the actual pulling, since it was done by one volunteer, no funding or budget was involved in that.

On the cover of this newsletter is a photo of some of the ivy that was hauled away. Here is another:



Eco Star awards

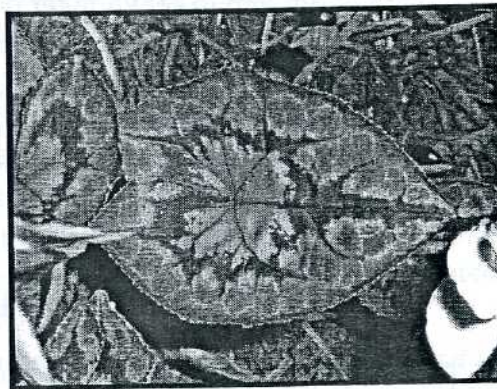
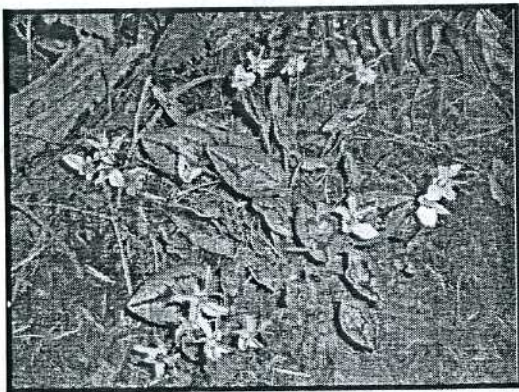
Eco Star awards are given out by the Capital Regional District in recognition of individuals, groups or organizations who raise awareness or take action to protect, restore and rescue damaged and endangered plant life, animals and/or ecosystems. Our Society has nominated Dick Battles for this award for the reasons set out above.

Other invasives?

Ivy and holly and daphne all present a real hazard to the natural flora of Mount Douglas Park, so we don't have to question their removal. But there are other invasives that are less easily classified.

Late this summer the Friends heard from Loukas Raptis, who describes himself as "an amateur naturalist who likes to poke around." One day he was in Mount Douglas Park looking at the fall hatch of termites with his 3-year-old daughter (who "can spot a broken-off termite wing from a mile away") when he spotted a plant on the north side along Douglas Creek that he had never seen before. He couldn't identify it with the help of field guides, and wondered if it might be a garden escape.

We couldn't help him, but he found out himself (and let us know) that it is a *Cyclamen*, already widespread in small woodland areas around Victoria. He thinks it likely that it may grow elsewhere in the Park as well. Here are his pictures of it:



Its flowers are providing continuous nourishment to the tiny hover-fly *Baccha elongata*: he watched many of them visit the flowers every two minutes or so for about an hour.

Bob Bridgeman cites another case—the proliferation of *Aesculus hippocastanum* along the riparian area alongside the Creek. A couple of large examples are at the top end downstream of the fire road culvert. Seedlings are popping up down the length of the Creek. The species is found in wet areas and is naturalized in Victoria. He says these trees provide the structure that we are trying to restore to the Creek—rooted stream banks, leaf and insect input, shade and the potential to create woody debris piles in the Creek - but also displaces native vegetation.

So what to do? Where do we put the *Cyclamen* and *Aesculus hippocastanum* on the priority list for removal of exotics? We confess to not knowing.

Frontrunners Gutbusters

This is an Association that organises Mountain Trail Running Events at locations over BC. Runners from different countries have entered these contests. Since 2003 on a yearly basis Mount Douglas has been one of the sites of these meetings. The most recent meeting here was on June 11th. As usual on this occasion there were two courses for the runners, a short one of 5km to the top and a long one of 12km over 4 summits. The races started from the picnic area by the main parking lot at 10:00am, finished there by 12.30pm, and were followed by prize-giving celebrations.

In pursuit of our aim to get younger people to join our Society, and in the hope that an interest in running the Park's trails might expand into an interest in the welfare of the Park, we secured permission from the organisers to put up our display tent on the picnic site. This at least gave us the opportunity to try out our newly acquired display boards in outdoor conditions. Although some of the runners or their supporters looked into the tent, regrettably none of them signed up. .

The shoreline

What a year it's been for Mother Nature showing just what she can do to the well-laid and not so well-laid plans that people have for securing their shores. At the AGM. Peter Sparanese and John Reedshaw presented the latest developments in the plan for securing the toe of the cliff in the park. However, the next step has been delayed because Peter
